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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, June 26, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Questions and Answers." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Yesterday you and I talked over ways to use skim milk. Today I find, right on top of my mail, a question about using sour milk. I'm pleased to answer that question, for it is one that puzzles many cooks, particularly young cooks. I'm also pleased to answer the question because I think more people should appreciate how good and useful a food sour milk is. It always saddens my thrifty soul to see some housekeeper throwing out sour milk because she doesn't know how to use it up.

Well, the question is: "Can I substitute sour milk and soda for sweet milk in a muffin recipe?"

And the answer is: Indeed, you can. In fact, you can use either sweet or sour milk in any quick-bread recipe that calls for milk, provided that you work out the proportions carefully. That holds true for muffins, biscuits, quick loaf-bread, waffles, griddle cakes and also gingerbread. Let's see just how you make the change from sour to sweet milk in a recipe. Suppose that your recipe calls for 1 cup of sweet milk and 4 teaspoons of baking powder. Well, you use the same measure of sour milk as sweet milk -- 1 cup. That means thick sour milk, by the way -- the kind that has soured rapidly and is often called clabber milk. Then use a scant 1/2 teaspoon of soda, and two instead of 4 teaspoons of baking powder. You see, you don't omit the baking powder when you use soda. You just use less of it and mix the soda with the flour and other dry ingredients. Never stir soda into the sour milk.

The second question is from a lady who wants some advice about making fruit pickles. Another good question. Pickling is one of many good ways to save the surplus fruits from your garden or orchard for use next winter. Pickles, of course, aren't what you might call a "necessity food." They're the extras, the little special~~s~~ that add variety, zest, and flavor to a meal. Probably you'll can most of your fruit for the winter or use it in jellies, jams, and marmalades. Probably you'll ~~can most of your~~ also bottle some of the juice for cool summer drinks and winter desserts. Then, if you live in a warm dry climate, you may save some of your fruit by drying. But for something a little different, a little special, put up a few jars of fruit pickles. They're good with meat -- roasts in winter, or cold cuts in summer. Fruit pickles happen to be the easiest kind of pickles to make. You can pickle your cherries, peaches, crabapples, or

pears just by cooking them in spicy, sweet-sour sirup. Cook together vinegar, water, sugar and a little bag of mixed spices for about five minutes. Then drop in the fruit and cook until just tender. Remove the kettle from the fire and let the fruit stand in the sirup overnight. Drain it. Remove the spice bag. Put the fruit in sterilized jars. Heat the sirup to boiling. Fill the jars with boiling sirup and seal. Easy, isn't it?

By the way, if you are pickling rather hard fruits like crabapples or small pears, you'll have better results if you cook the fruit in hot water a few minutes before you put it in the sirup. This makes the fruit tender. Be sure you choose fresh, perfect fruit for pickling and have it of uniform size and ripeness so the pickling sirup will penetrate evenly.

While we're on this question of pickling fruits, let's answer two more questions that people often ask. The first is about the spice to use. Should you use powdered spice or whole spice in fruit pickles? Whole spice, say the specialists -- several kinds tied up together loosely in a little cheesecloth bag. Spice tends to make pickles dark as they stand. You'll avoid this trouble if you drop the bag in the sirup in which you cook your pickles and before you put the pickles in the jar, take out the bag.

The second question is about the sugar to use in pickling. Some old-fashioned recipes call for brown instead of granulated sugar. The specialists prefer granulated. But it all depends on the kind of pickle you prefer. Brown sugar gives the pickles a stronger flavor and a darker color. Some people compromise and use mostly granulated sugar with just a bit of brown to give the pickles a little richer taste.

Here's another question about fruit preservation. This is about putting up juices. There's a thrifty idea. It's such a good idea that I feel like speaking of it often. A row of bottles of various fruit juices on your pantry or cellar shelves will come in handy the year around for desserts and summer beverages and fruit appetizers to start your meals. Fruit juices are easy to put up. You don't even have to boil them. Just simmer any juice ten minutes before you bottle them and five minutes after they're in bottles in the hot water bath. The flavor of the fruit is fresher and more natural and the color is better if you simply press the juice from the heated fruit and process it at a temperature below the boiling point. However, if you plan to make this juice into jelly later, you'll need to boil the juice to extract the pectin.

But see here. I'm wandering away from the question that I started to answer. The question was: "What kind of fruit juices are best for bottling?"

The answer is: Almost any kind of juicy fruit you happen to have on hand -- cherry, currant, elderberry, loganberry, grape, red and black raspberry.

Remember to keep all canned and bottled fruit products in a dark, dry, cool place.

